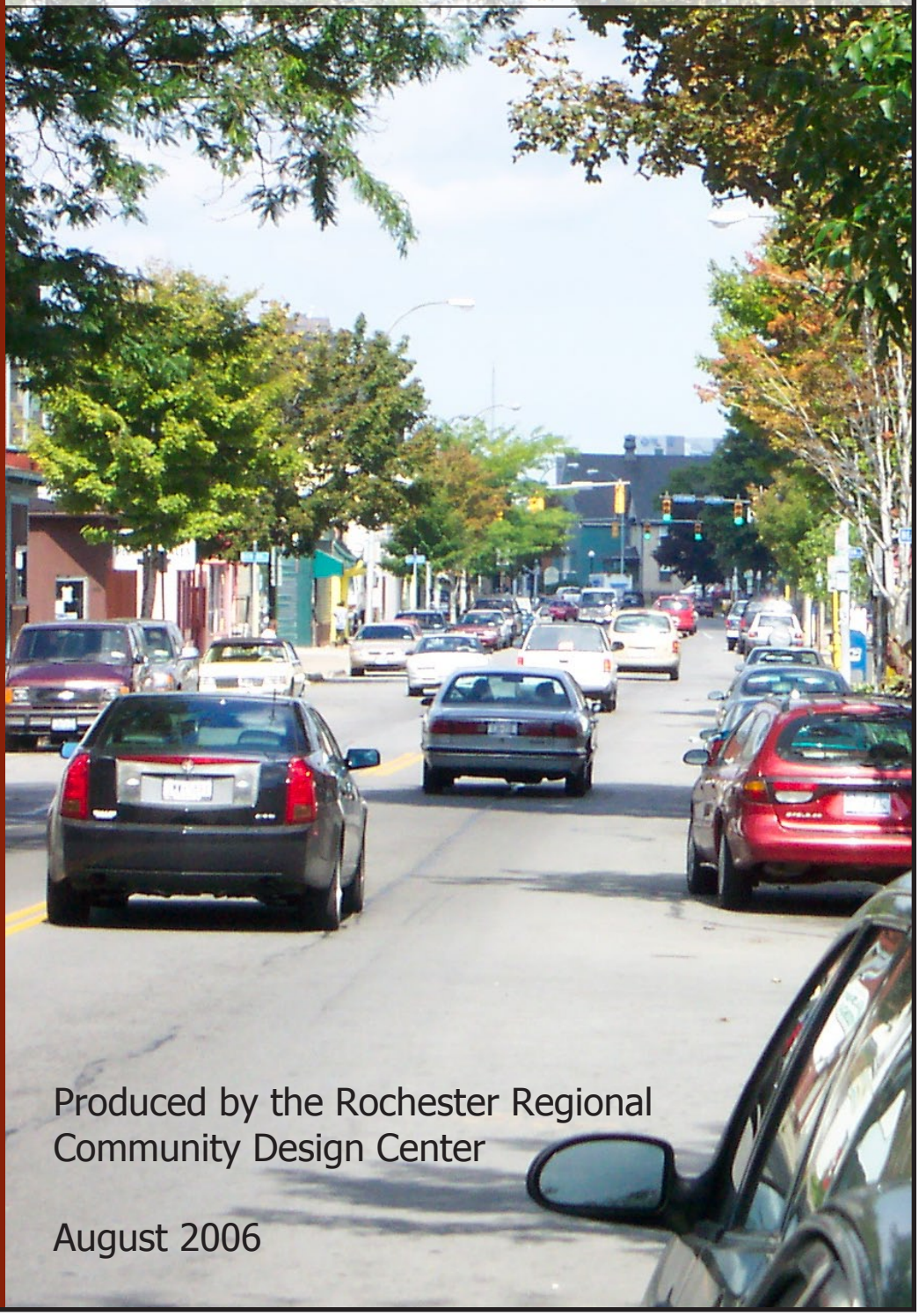
A Community-Based Vision
Plan for the City of Rochester's

South Clinton Avenue



Produced by the Rochester Regional
Community Design Center

August 2006

RRCDC
ROCHESTER REGIONAL
COMMUNITY DESIGN CENTER

A Community-Based Vision Plan for the City of Rochester's South Clinton Avenue

August 2006

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Table of Contents

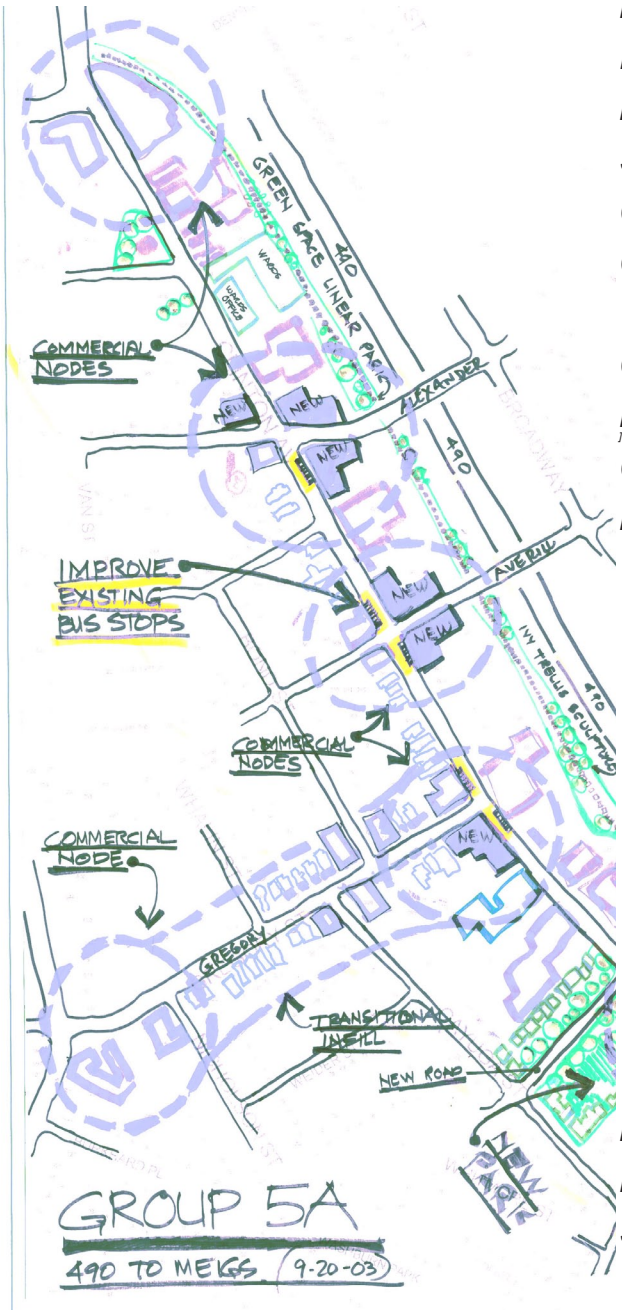


Table of Contents . . . 5

Acknowledgements . . . 6

About the RRCDC . . . 7

Executive Summary . . . 8

Introduction . . . 10

History of South Clinton Avenue . . . 12

South Clinton Avenue Today . . . 14

Charrette Coordination and Planning . . . 16

Charrette Steering Committee Members . . . 17

The Charrette Event . . . 18

Charrette Focus Areas . . . 19

Base Map of the Charrette Area . . . 20

Charrette Results . . . 21

Post Charrette Work, Phase 1 . . . 28

The Vision Plan

- *Introduction . . . 29*
- *Charrette Area Neighborhoods Overview*
- *Charrette Area Design Scheme*
- *Color Legend*
- *Vision Plan Overview . . . 30*
- *Proposed Bicycle Accomodations . . . 32*
- *Drawing A - Discussion and Plan . . . 33*
- *Alexander Street Elevation*
- *Drawing B - Discussion and Plan . . . 35*
- *Gregory Street Detail*
- *Drawing C - Discussion and Plan . . . 37*
- *South Goodman Street Detail*
- *Drawing D - Discussion and Plan . . . 39*

Post Charrette Work, Phase 2 . . . 41

Recommendations for Implementation . . . 42

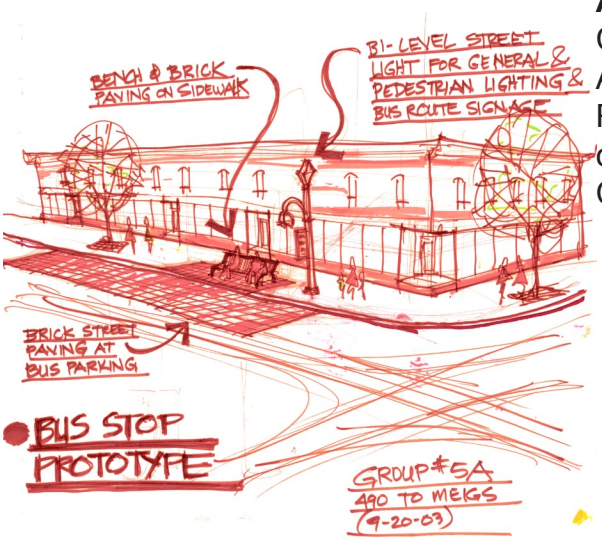
Summary and Conclusions . . . 47

Acknowledgements

The Rochester Regional Community Design Center thankfully acknowledges the important contributions of people and organizations who were involved with charrette planning, the charrette event and the post-charrette process. We also give thanks to those who contributed funding towards the charrette event and to those individuals and organizations who financially support the Design Center, helping to make the South Clinton and other charrettes possible.

Thank you to the South Clinton Avenue Charrette Steering Committee and the Evolving South Clinton Avenue's Places and Environment Committee and the represented organizations making up these committees; Elina Bravve, Rose O'Keefe, Maureen Murphy, Dan Buyer and Helen Hogan for their contributions to this report; members of the RRCDC Design Studio and the South Clinton Avenue Design Team and the Charrette Facilitators for volunteering their time and professional skills; City Blue Imaging Services for their contributed services; and the many others who have generously been involved in this process.

A Special Thank You to the Eastman Kodak Corporation, South Clinton Avenue Merchants Association, Neighborhood Associations, AIA - Rochester Chapter, and the City of Rochester for contributing funds that made the South Clinton Avenue Charrette possible.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BRICK STREET PAVING AT BUS PARKING
BUS STOP PROTOTYPE
GROUP #5A
490 TO MEGS
(9-20-03)

About the RRCDC

The mission of the non-profit Rochester Regional Community Design Center (RRCDC) is to act as a multifaceted resource center to assist municipalities and citizens of the Greater Rochester Region to define, understand, promote and implement concepts of design excellence and sustainability for the public realm and built environment.

One of our most effective means of civic engagement is the community design charrette, an intensive, participatory planning process that brings together a variety of community stakeholders to observe and share ideas about their community. Together they produce tangible steps towards achieving neighborhood consensus for a community vision. As facilitator, we work with a Steering Committee of neighborhood representatives to plan the charrette, provide design professionals at the event to help translate citizens' ideas into physical drawings, and follow through with those initial ideas to create a final set of plans and recommendations for the community.

Since we began our work as the AIA Rochester Urban Design Committee (UDC) in 1998, the group has facilitated over twenty community design charrettes, including the Center City Charrette that resulted in a community-based vision for Rochester's downtown, and the University Avenue Charrette that resulted in construction of the award-winning ARTWalk project. In 2004, we officially incorporated as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, and continue to serve our region as we seek to grow, ourselves.

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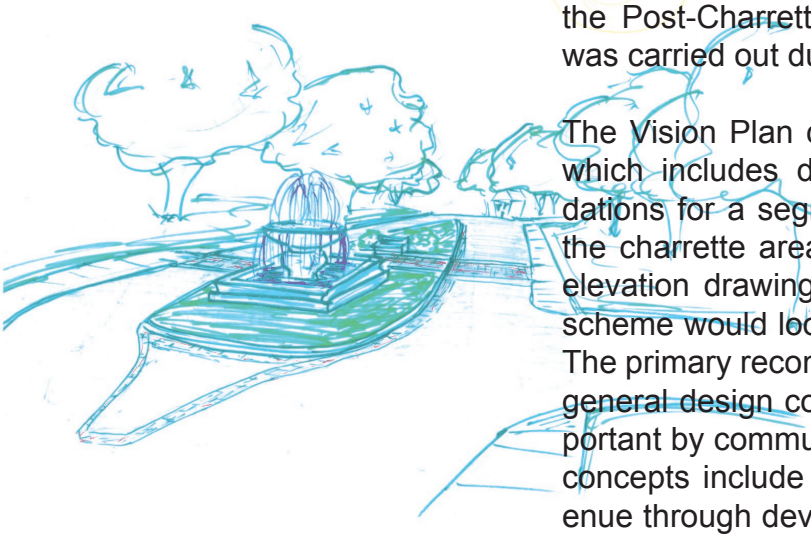
Executive Summary

A community-based "Vision Plan" for the City of Rochester's South Clinton Avenue has been prepared by the RRCDC in order to provide written and visual urban design plans that reflect the goals and ideas of community members for development in their neighborhoods.

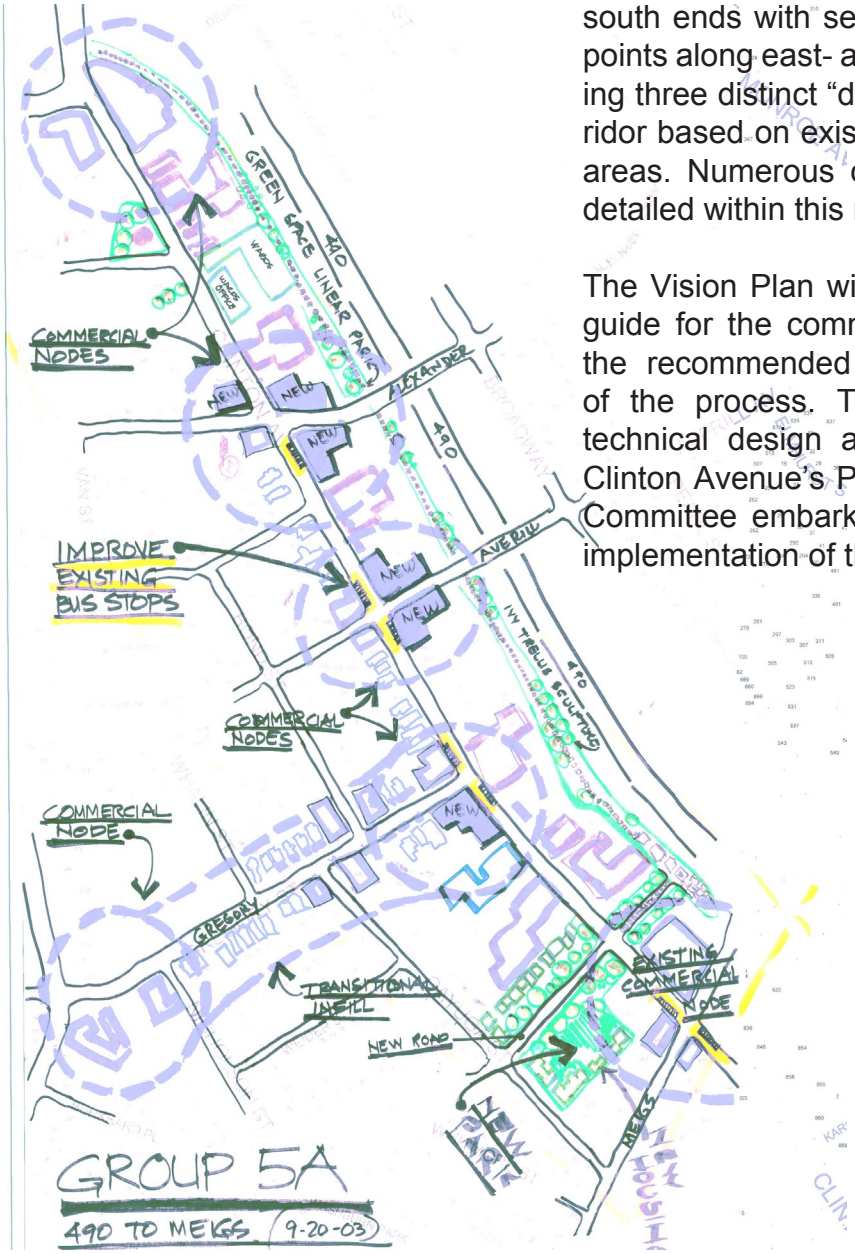
The final Vision Plan incorporates ideas suggested by over one hundred and fifty community members at the South Clinton Avenue Community Design Charrette held in September, 2003, and expresses these ideas as elements of good design and planning for healthy, viable communities. The process of creating the plan began over three years ago when members of the South East Area Coalition (SEAC) first contacted the RRCDC. Following a hiatus during which the South Clinton Avenue Steering Committee underwent an organizational shift, the Post-Charrette process of creating a Vision Plan was carried out during the spring and summer of 2006.



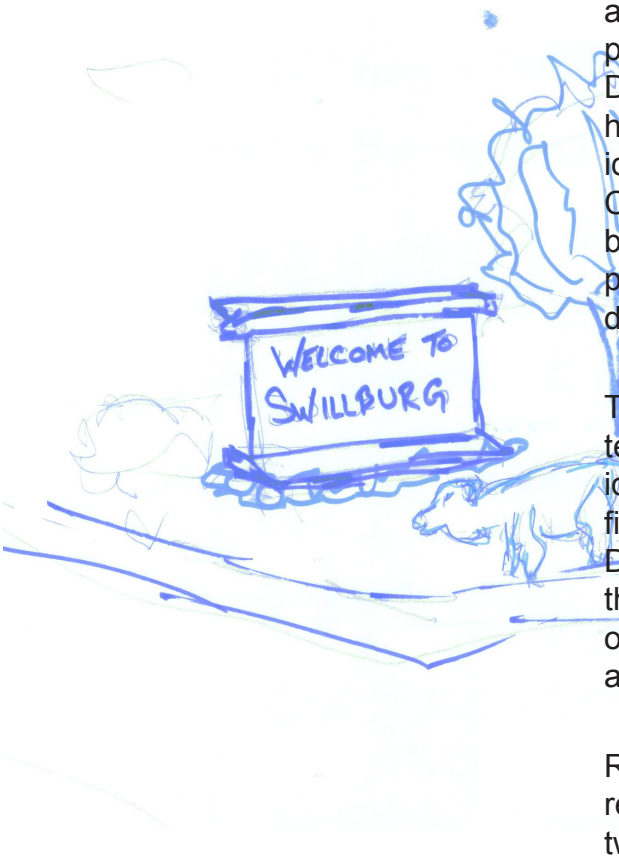
The Vision Plan contains overlay base plans, each of which includes design and development recommendations for a segment of South Clinton Avenue within the charrette area. The Vision Plan also includes two elevation drawings which show how the implemented scheme would look and feel from a user's perspective. The primary recommendations in the plan are based on general design concepts which were expressed as important by community members at the charrette. These concepts include creating a strong identity for the avenue through development of focal points and themes, designing for pedestrian-scale activity, accommodating all types of transportation rather than giving precedence to cars, providing infill development and creating connections between South Clinton Avenue and the surrounding neighborhoods.

Major recommendations include creating a network of bicycle routes throughout the neighborhood, transforming the existing intersection at South Goodman Street into a major focal point as a pedestrian-friendly plaza, adding primary gateway monuments at the north and south ends with secondary gateway markers at entry points along east- and westbound streets and developing three distinct “districts” along the length of the corridor based on existing types of development in those areas. Numerous other proposed improvements are detailed within this report in the “Vision Plan” section.

The Vision Plan will serve as, among other things, a guide for the community as they seek to implement the recommended changes during the next phase of the process. The RRCDC is available to offer technical design assistance as the Evolving South Clinton Avenue’s Places and Environment (ESCAPE) Committee embarks upon a series of steps towards implementation of the Vision Plan.



Introduction

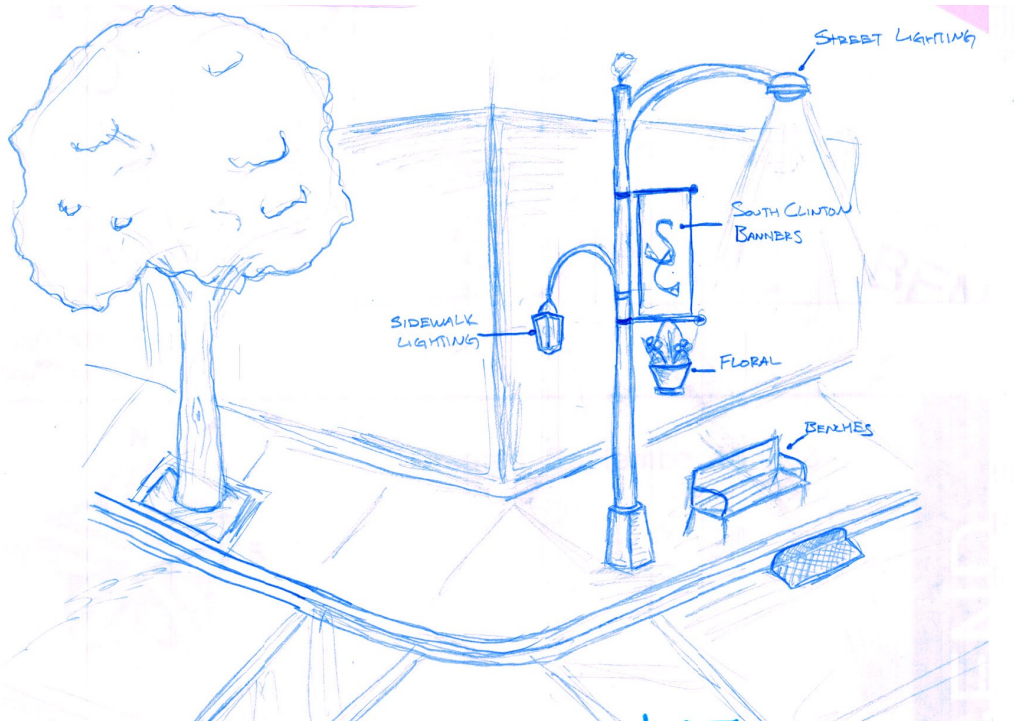


On September 20, 2003, over one hundred and fifty community members from the neighborhoods around South Clinton Avenue gathered with professional designers to exchange ideas and contribute towards a common vision for the future of the South Clinton corridor. For the next two years, the drawings and ideas generated at the charrette were stored safely at the RRCDC while the community leadership underwent an organizational restructuring. By 2006, a solid core of leadership reemerged as the Evolving South Clinton Avenue's Places and Environment (ESCAPE) Committee and the community was ready to move ahead with the design process. Picking up where the process left off in 2003, the South Clinton Avenue Design Team with input from the ESCAPE Committee has analyzed, synthesized and translated the charrette ideas into tangible plans for development. The ESCAPE Committee is now energized and poised to move beyond visioning stages and into an implementation process towards the realization of a healthier, better-designed and more viable neighborhood.

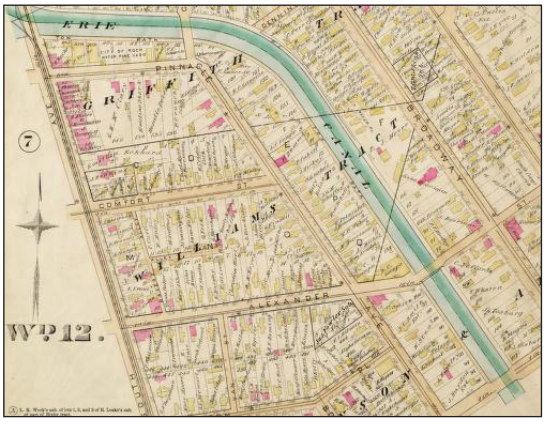
This report chronicles the processes before and after the charrette, provides a record of the community ideas from the charrette and shows and describes the final Vision Plan, which was developed by the RRCDC Design Studio based on those ideas. Each section of the report explores a different aspect of the community or the process involved in creating and implementing a Vision Plan.

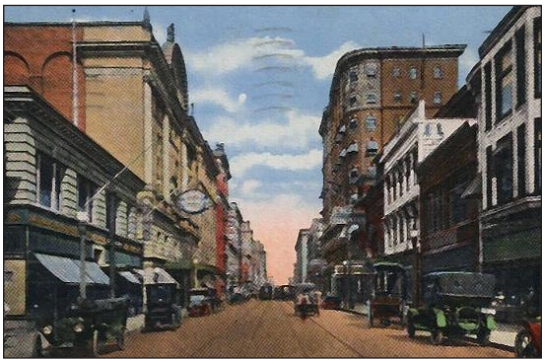
RRCDC staff compiled the South Clinton charrette report during August of 2006, modeling the structure on two previous reports produced for the Upper Monroe Neighborhood and the Hamlet of Williamson. The report is intended as a resource for members of the

ESCAPE Committee as well as residents in the Ellwanger Barry, South Wedge and Swillburg neighborhoods which border South Clinton Avenue. It may also serve as a resource for other citizens and communities interested in exploring how a charrette process can help them approach community development in a more inclusive manner. The report is part of an historic record of South Clinton Avenue's physical and community revitalization process, a documentation of the efforts of the RRCDC and active neighborhood groups and a testament to the power of citizen engagement.



History of South Clinton Avenue





South Clinton, like most of Rochester's radial streets, is rumored to have begun as an old Indian trail. It was used during the early 1800s as a wagon road from south of Rochester to downtown, where the saw mills and flour mills were located. First called Cayuga Street and after the 1850s, Pinnacle Avenue, the street now called South Clinton began just south of the canal at what is now Byron Street.

"Clinton Avenue" was originally the name of what is now North Clinton, which started at Washington Square Park and continued north across Main Street and beyond. The street was named after Governor DeWitt Clinton, the prominent advocate for the Erie Canal.

The canal had an enormous impact on the development of Pinnacle Avenue and contributed towards the mixed-use character of the street that is still seen today.

Canal construction began in 1817 and was complete by 1825. During the 1820s and 1830s, the South Wedge developed as a working class neighborhood with a number of immigrant laborers who had come to build the canal. During the 1850s, boatyards lined Pinnacle Avenue and a number of groceries, saloons and other commercial development followed.

Between the 1850s and 1870s, the bulk of the Ellwanger-Barry and other agricultural tracts towards the southern section of the city were quickly parceled and developed. 90% of the South Wedge neighborhood was developed before 1900.

In 1893, Clinton Avenue was extended south across the canal for the first time, with the electrification of a north-south trolley line. Clinton Avenue absorbed Pinnacle, and continued south to the City Line.

A number of significant historic buildings can still be found along the South Clinton corridor. Towards Field Street, an original farmhouse still stands, dating to the 1850s.

In the first decade of the 20th century, the Max Lowenthal and Sons knitting factory was built at the northeast corner of what is today South Clinton and Byron. The building, now owned by the Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired, remains as the last major manufacturing building along Clinton from that era.

The intersection of Goodman Street and Clinton Avenue contains significant structures from the mid-1900s. The Cinema Theatre was first built in 1916 as a playhouse, changing its name to the Clinton Cinema in 1936. The Highland Diner was first built in 1940 and expanded in 1948.

During the 1960s, the construction of highway I-490 seriously altered the character of the street. The highway differed from the canal and the railroad that it succeeded because the highway required on- and off-ramps which required more physical space. Overhead photos from 1938 and 1963, respectively, show the loss of part of the South Clinton neighborhood with the construction of the highway. Since the 1960s, the major changes along South Clinton reflect the nation-wide trend toward car-oriented development.

South Clinton Avenue Today

South Clinton Avenue lies along the border of three city neighborhoods – the South Wedge and Swillburg to the west and the Ellwanger Barry neighborhood to the east. The corridor contains a strong mix of residential, commercial and industrial development.

As a “spoke” in the city’s radial street pattern, South Clinton Avenue serves as a primary gateway into the City of Rochester for traffic traveling north from Brighton. The avenue crosses the city line near Field Street.

The southern section of the corridor is characterized by primarily residential development. Many of the homes along this stretch are in well-maintained condition and the residential fabric of the street is relatively intact. The smaller cross streets along the length of the avenue are also primarily residential.

Further north, Clinton is characterized by a number of interspersed commercial and industrial buildings with some residential properties. Many of the commercial buildings contain restaurants or service providers.

Major industrial buildings along Clinton include the Ward warehouse, Rochester Meat, ABVI, Betlem Heating and Cooling and others. Some of the industrial complexes are housed in historic structures while others are in more modern industrial buildings. Some of the buildings are scaled and designed appropriately for the neighborhood, but others are characterized by poor design elements such as large unscreened parking lots, windowless building fronts and deteriorating facades. There are also a number of vacant properties in this segment of the corridor.

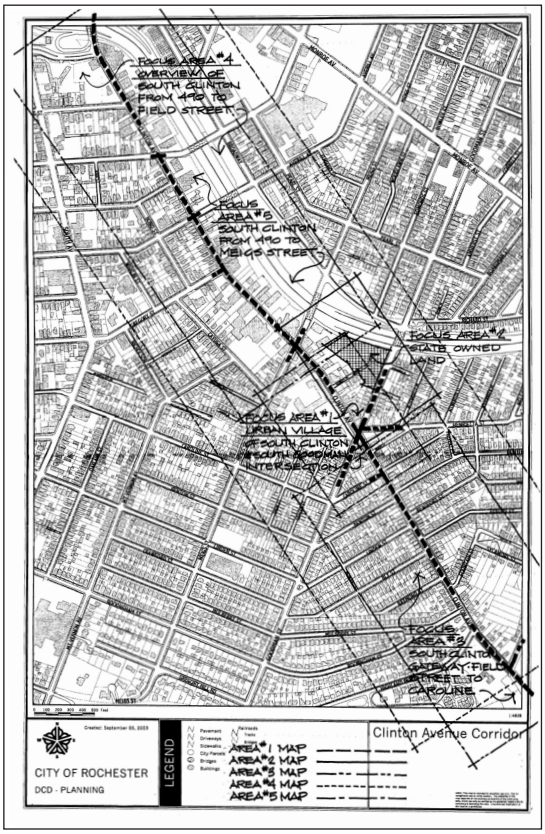
South Clinton Avenue contains a number of potential nodes at intersections with prominent cross streets such as Alexander, Gregory and Meigs Street and Averill Avenue. The most prominent node is the “Five Corners” intersection at South Goodman Street and Henrietta Street. Most of these intersections, including the South Goodman Street intersection, are characterized by the loss of one or more of the traditional corner buildings which once helped to define the nodes as focal points along the street.

At its north end near ABVI, South Clinton Avenue crosses over I-490, where the street becomes one way. This crossing currently poses a barrier for non-automobile traffic, inhibiting pedestrian movement along the avenue to Rochester’s downtown.

A currently vacant parcel between South Clinton Avenue, I-490, and South Goodman Street offers the opportunity for a large, cohesive development. Once the site of a large shoe-manufacturing company, the land is currently owned by the New York State D.O.T.

The primary challenge for citizens working to improve the corridor will be to maintain the mixed-use character of the street and to encourage economic development while providing a pedestrian friendly, community oriented atmosphere for the residents and visitors.

Charrette Coordination and Planning



The South Clinton Design Charrette coordination effort began early in 2003 with stretegy meetings between the South East Area Coalition (SEAC) and the RRCDC. The South Clinton Avenue Steering Committee was formed, composed of representatives from SEAC and a number of other stakeholder groups such as the South Clinton Merchants Organization, the South Wedge Planning Committee and local neighborhood groups such as the Swillburg and Elwanger Barry Neighborhood Associations.

A core group of volunteer designer professionals from RRCDC met monthly with the Steering committee to design the structure and plan the logistics of the charrette. RRCDC also led the Steering Committee members through a series of assignments to help them understand the physical aspects of their neighborhood in order to define the charrette area and focus areas and to identify charrette goals.

Charrette funding was provided through a grant from the Eastman Kodak Corporation and by the Neighborhood Associations and local merchants.

Resident participation in the charrette process was encouraged through word of mouth and newsletter distribution.

Two major challenges in the coordination process included the volunteer-based nature of the project and the changing leadership of several key organizations, resulting in a several-year lapse between the charrette event and the post-charrette phase. Now that a strong core of leadership has been reestablished with the formation of the ESCAPE Committee, the community has continued through the first Post-Charrette Phase and stands poised to enter the Implementation Phase.

Charrette Steering Committee Member Organizations

South East Area Coalition

South Wedge Planning Committee

South Clinton Merchants Association

Neighbors Building Neighborhoods Sector 6

Highland NET Office

Ellwanger & Barry Neighborhood Association

Swillburg Neighborhood Association

City of Rochester

Alfred State College

Rochester Regional Community Design Center

The Charrette Event

The South Clinton Avenue Community Design Charrette was held on Saturday, September 20, 2003, at the Family Life Center of Baber A.M.E. Church. Over a hundred and fifty community members participated, including residents, merchants and interested citizens from the three bordering neighborhoods who came together with design professionals to share ideas and brainstorm about the future of the corridor.

The day kicked off with presentations about the area's history and an overview of good design in the public realm. Participants were randomly assigned to one of five focus areas, with two study groups for each focus area. They spent the rest of the morning walking their focus areas and making notes about features they liked and things to improve.

After lunch, participants convened at the drawing table, where they used markers to record their ideas on base maps and easel pads. The afternoon culminated with presentations from each group to the larger charrette audience.

SoClin Charrette

Charrette Focus Areas

Clinton-Goodman Intersection:

The intersection of Clinton and South Goodman including the area from Caroline Street to Meigs Street and extending one to two blocks on all side streets.

State-D.O.T. Owned Land:

An undeveloped parcel of nearly two acres, bound by I-490 to the north and Goodman to the east.

Gateway:

South Clinton Avenue from Field Street to Caroline Street.

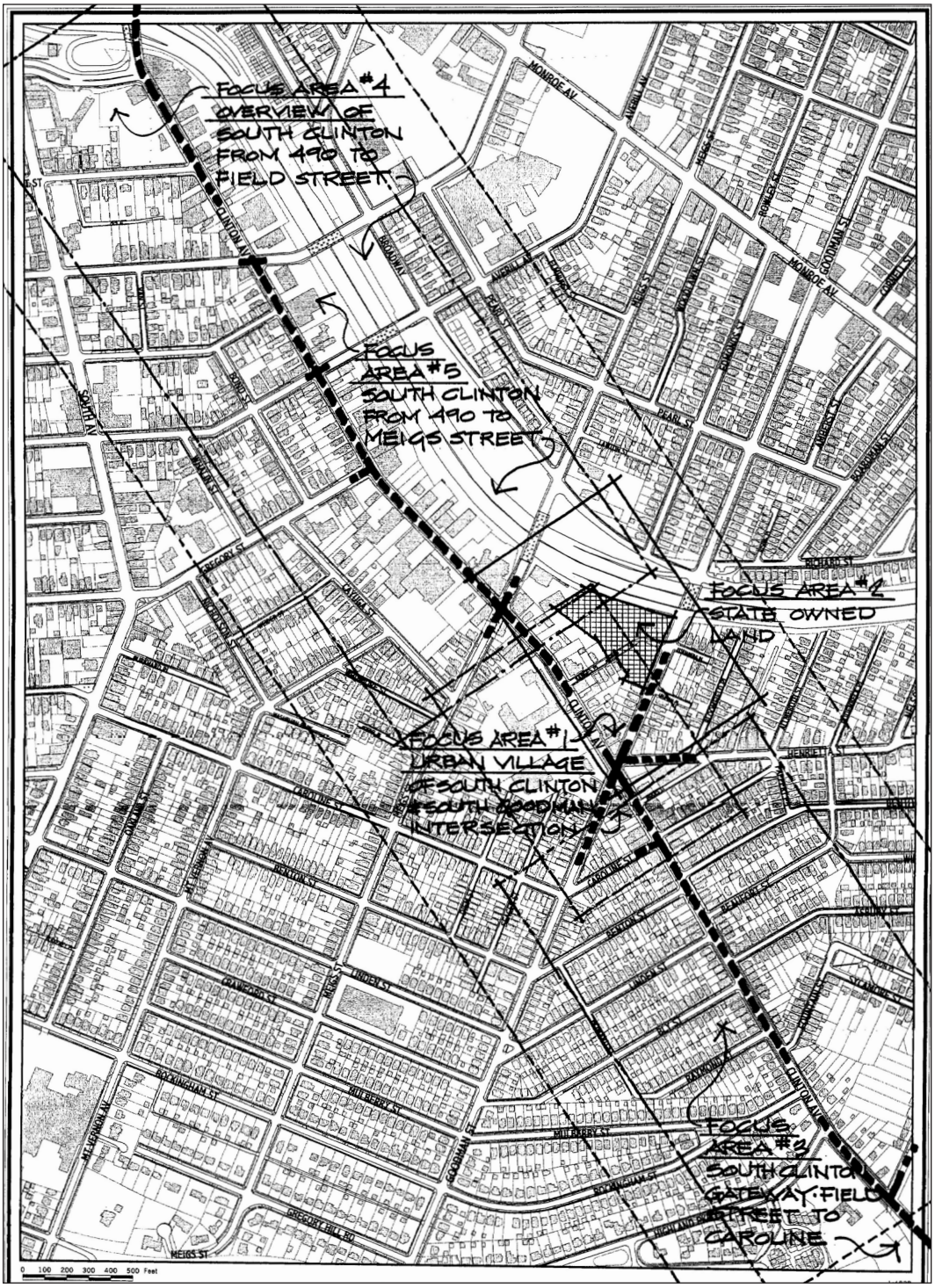
Whole Street:

South Clinton Avenue from the City Line to the Inner Loop.

Meigs Street to I-490:

Meigs Street to I-490 and a block in each direction on intersecting side streets.

Base Map of the Charrette Area and Focus Areas

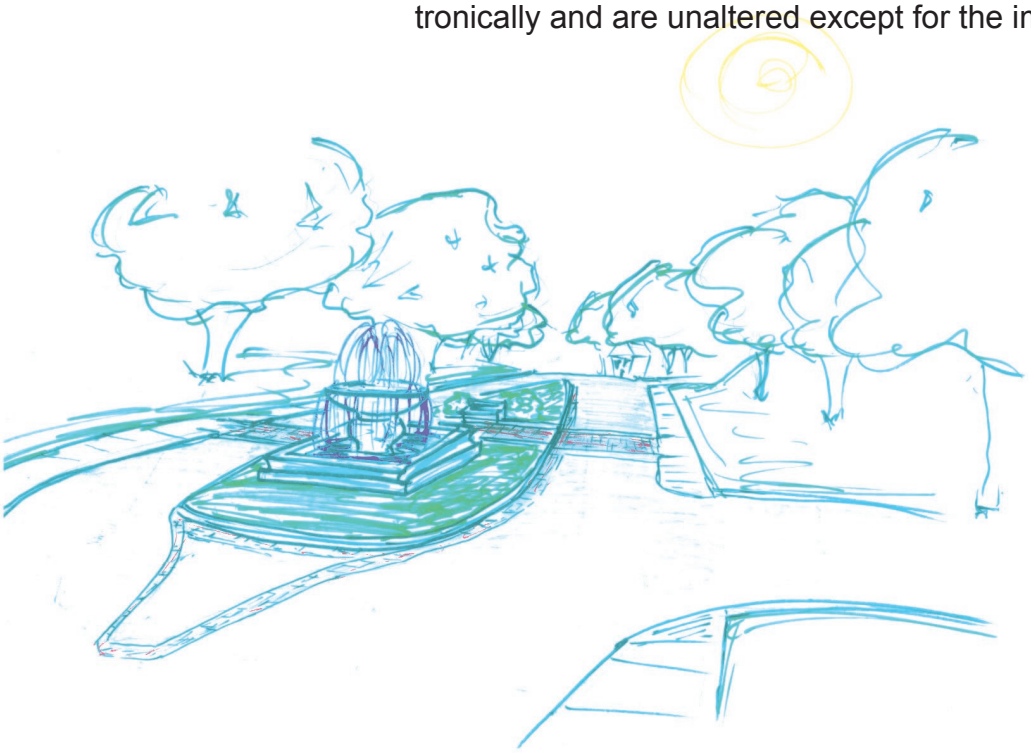


Charrette Results

The Charrette resulted in a diversity of thoughtful and creative suggestions for improving the corridor. While each focus group concentrated on a specific topic and developed unique approaches to their particular design challenges, similar themes also wove throughout many of the groups' results. In some cases the same specific idea arose independently in multiple groups.

The following pages present the drawings and concepts produced at the charrette in 2003, organized by focus area. General themes and main ideas that emerged in many focus groups have been distilled into guidelines for development. Specific suggestions for development are also shown and described.

The renderings on the following pages are images of actual drawings produced by participants and facilitators in the 2003 charrette that have been scanned electronically and are unaltered except for the image size.



Community-Based Guiding Principles for Development

Design for Pedestrian Scale Activity

Create a Sense of Place and Identity

Devise Parking Strategies and Screen Parking Lots

Plan for Mixed Use

Respect the “Vernacular“ Architecture

Improve Accessibility and Connections for All Types of Traffic - Pedestrians, Cyclists, Bus Riders and Cars

Establish Strong Gateways

Develop Pocket Parks and Green Spaces

Encourage Infill Development and Rebuild Important “Nodes”

Calm Traffic

Clinton-Goodman Intersection

Focus Area 1: The intersection of Clinton and South Goodman including the area from Caroline Street to Meigs Street and extending one to two blocks on all side streets.

Goals: Highlight this area as a focal point of the Avenue and capitalize on the mixed-use nature of the area.

Community Suggestions from the Charrette:

Improve pedestrian circulation by adding well-defined crosswalks, pedestrian-only alleys and paths through green spaces.

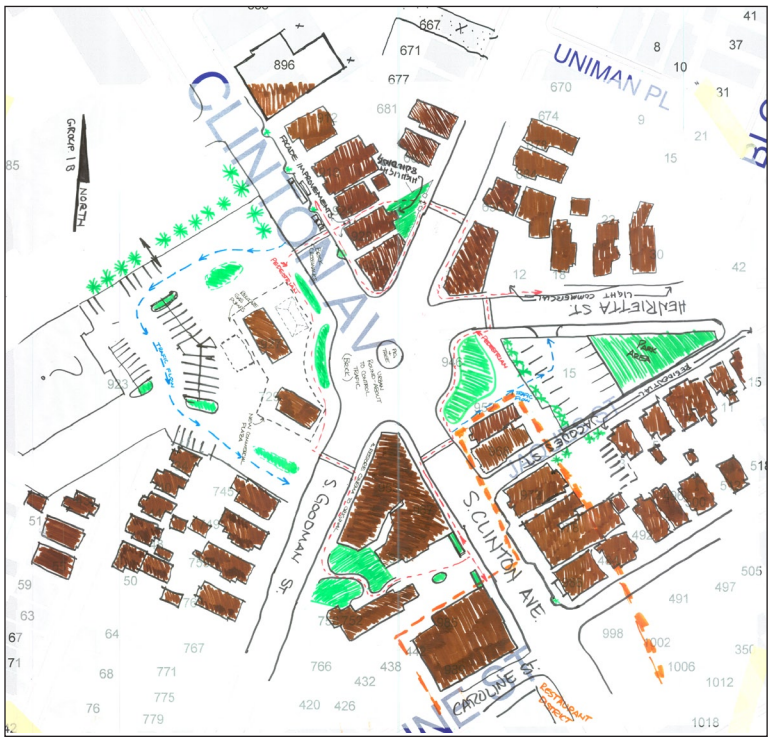
Transform the intersection into a distinct “plaza” with public art, renovated facades and new pocket parks.

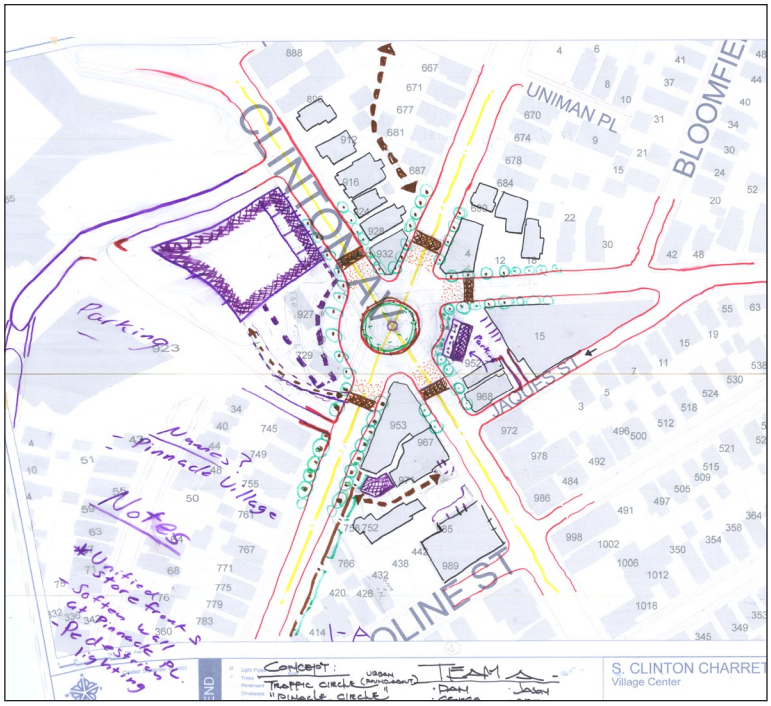
Build to the sidewalk line at all five corners.

Introduce traffic calming structures such as a roundabout.

Introduce new parkings strategies including hiding parking behind buildings, screening parking lots and adding bump-outs to better define on-street parking.

Develop pocket parks and add street trees.





State D.O.T.-Owned Land

Focus Area 2: An undeveloped parcel of nearly two acres, bound by I-490 to the north and Goodman to the east.

Goals: Propose neighborhood-scale development for this parcel, taking into account the history of the site and the needs of the area residents.

Community Suggestions from the Charrette:

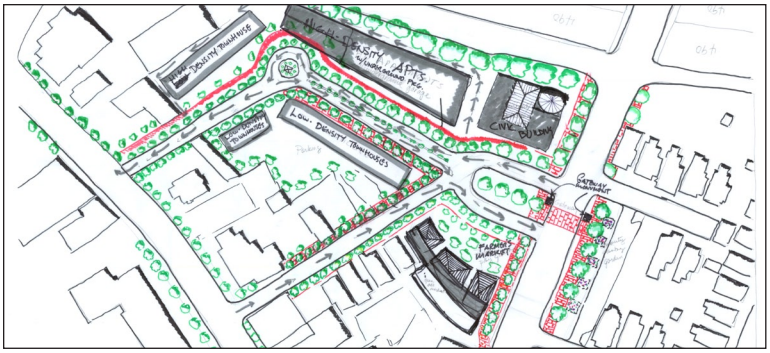
Develop gateway enhancements on South Goodman Street that incorporate features such as a landscaped median, public art, a fountain and seating.

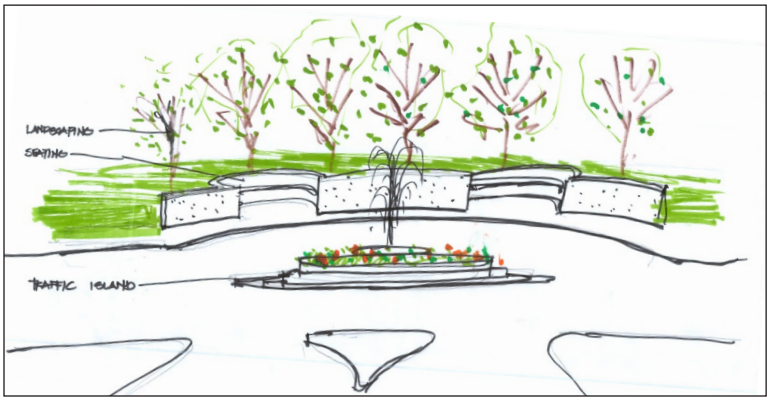
Increase accessibility to and circulation through the parcel by adding new streets and creating more connections with South Clinton Avenue and South Goodman Street.

Solicit mixed-use programming that caters to community use, such as a civic building, community center or new commercial and/or residential development.

Design for pedestrian traffic and alternative transportation in addition to cars.

Parking should be hidden using landscaping or buried and I-490 should be buffered.





Gateway

Focus Area 3: South Clinton Avenue from Field Street to Caroline Street.

Goals: Propose gateway features that reflect the various neighborhoods bordering South Clinton Avenue and take into account the mix of commercial and residential properties in this area.

Community Suggestions from the Charrette:

Celebrate the area's history by designing a gateway with a fountain or other features that reflect the character of the corridor.

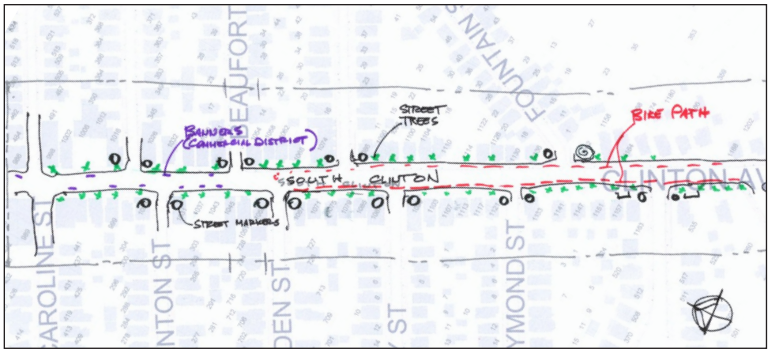
Enhance the pedestrian realm with lighting, street furniture and outdoor seating for restaurants.

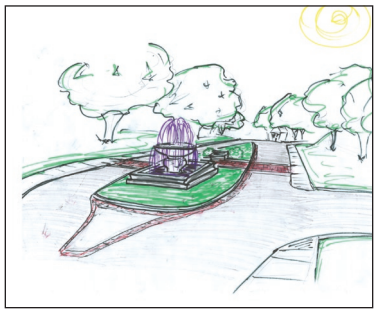
Add bicycle lanes to the roadway and bicycle racks outside of shops.

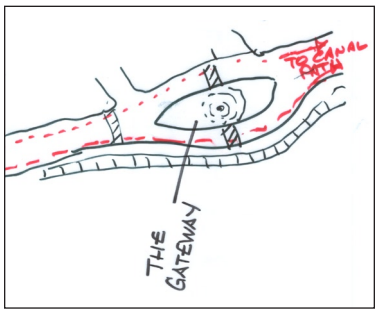
Incorporate decorative design elements including medians, landscaping, signage, public art, banners, etc.

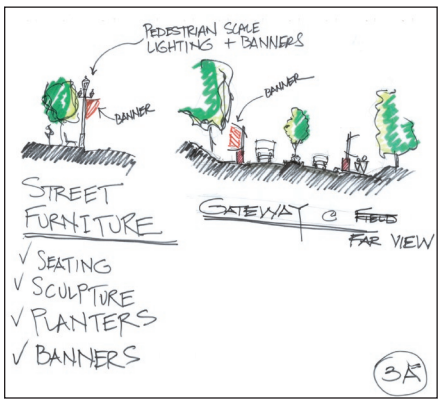
Encourage facade improvements along the corridor, using awnings, increased building transparency, planters, etc.

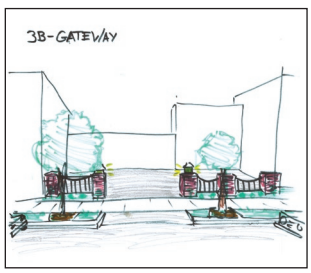
Use landscaping to screen parking lots.











Whole Street

Focus Area 4: South Clinton Avenue from the city line to the Inner Loop.

Goals: Develop design standards and themes that will unifty the entire length of the avenue.

Community Suggestions from the Charrette:

Develop an “international” theme that reflects the existing, diverse businesses (especially eateries) located on South Clinton Avenue.

Create strong gateway markers.

Use lots of color and creative, whimsical signage.

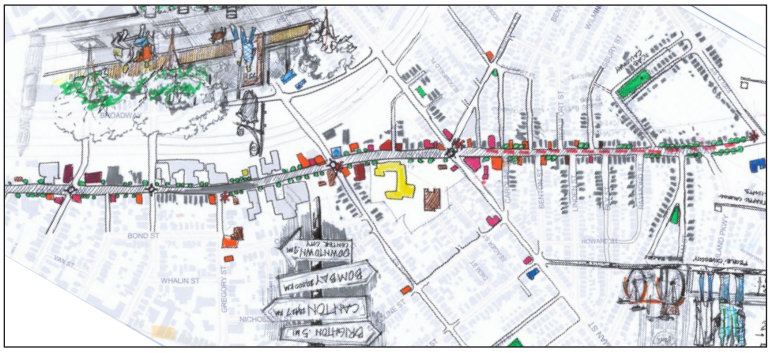
Build infill on vacant lots, for example at Gregory, South Goodman and other streets.

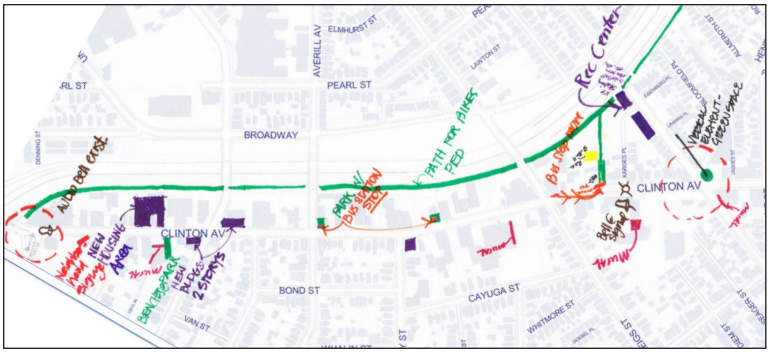
Screen parking or locate lots behind buildings.

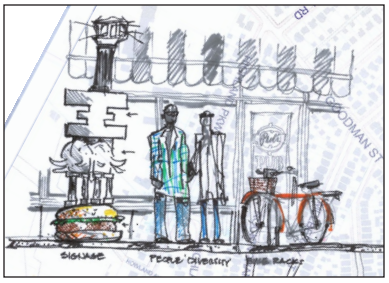
Incorporate bicycle paths and bike racks and improve bus stops.

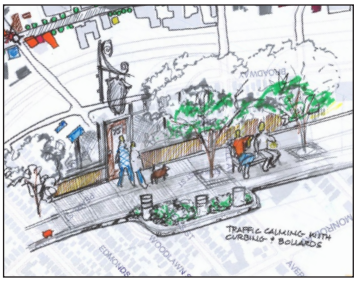
Utilize pedestrian-scale features such as public art, banners, street trees, street furniture, etc.

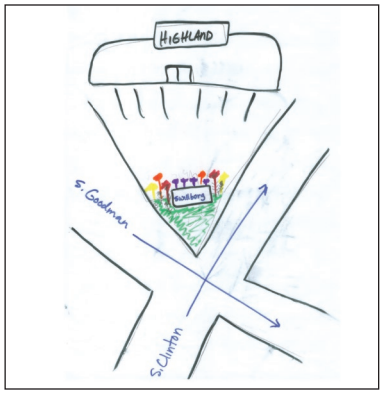
Improve existing pocket parks and create new green spaces; in particular, enhance the intersection of South Clinton Avenue and South Goodman Street with landscaping and signage.











Meigs Street to I-490

Focus Area 5: Meigs Street to I-490 and a block in each direction on intersecting side streets.

Goals: Suggest ways to develop this area as a gateway to South Clinton Avenue and encourage mixed-use and owner-occupancy.

Community Suggestions from the Charrette:

Develop infill buildings or pocket parks, especially at corners of intersections like Averrill Avenue and Alexander and Gregory Streets, which serve as nodes along the avenue and provide connections to other major streets.

Plan for mixed-use and encourage adaptive re-use of buildings such as the Ward storage facility.

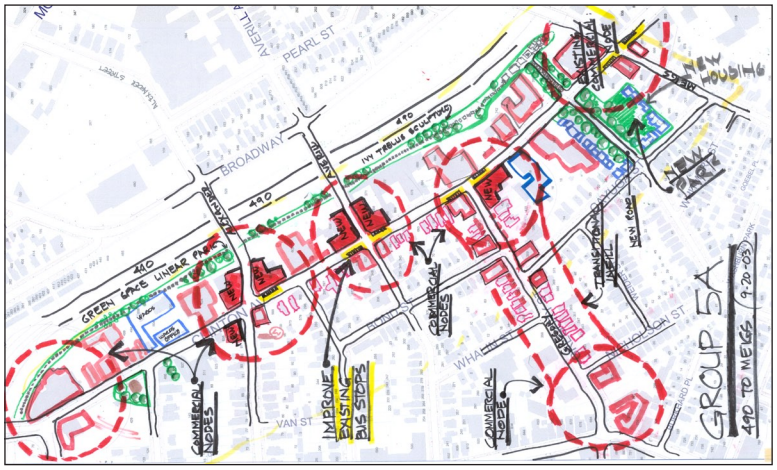
Implement uniform design standards such as color.

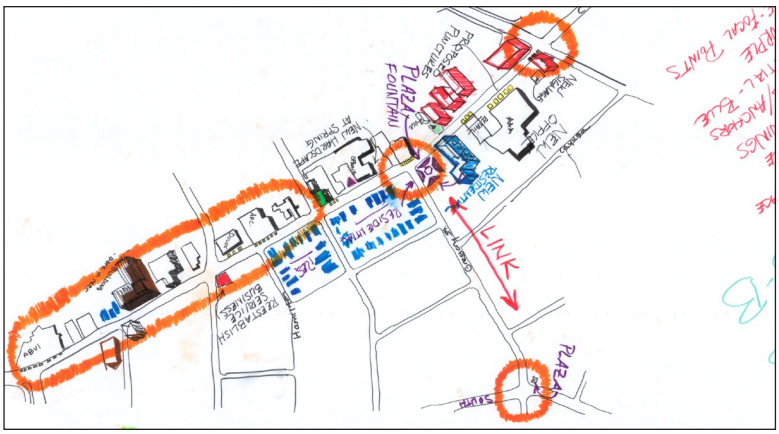
Create focal points which incorporate public art at Gregory Street and other intersections.

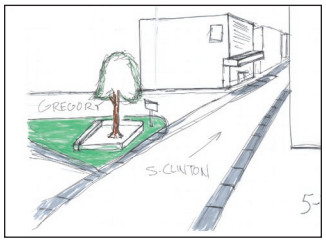
Improve bus stops.

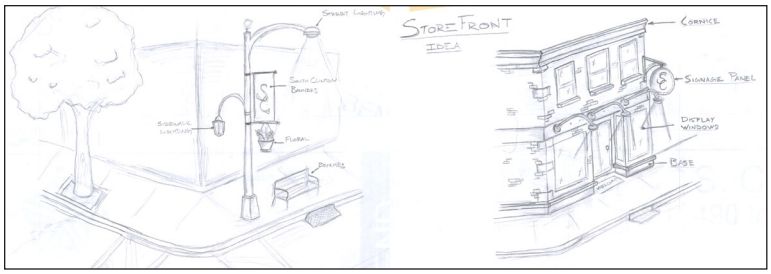
Encourage facade renovations and building upkeep.

Screen parking lots and improve the I-490 buffer.

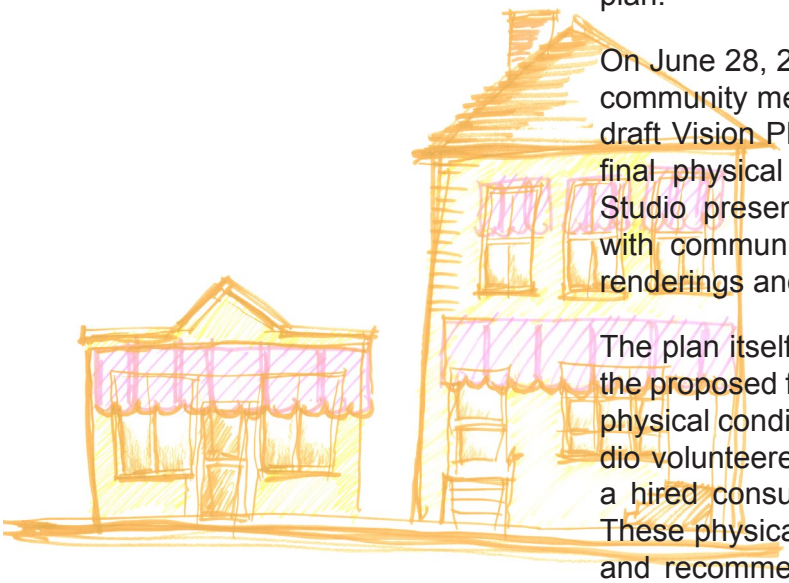








Post-Charrette Work, Phase 1: Vision Plan Development



After a charrette, ideas raised must be translated into design concepts that are shown on a physical plan, the "Vision Plan." During the first phase of Post-Charrette work for the South Clinton Avenue Vision Plan, the RRCDC Design Studio, in consultation with the ESCAPE Committee, discussed strategies for expressing the charrette ideas, prioritized those ideas and made initial decisions about what would be included in the physical plan.

On June 28, 2006, a public meeting attended by over 50 community members gave the public a chance to review draft Vision Plans and to discuss initial concepts for the final physical plans. Members of the RRCDC Design Studio presented the draft plans, and then dialogued with community members to gain feedback. The final renderings and Vision Plan incorporate that feedback.

The plan itself is created as multiple drawings that show the proposed features drawn from a base map of existing physical conditions. Members of the RRCDC Design Studio volunteered to study and create the final plans, and a hired consultant contributed to the physical drawing. These physical plans, together with the written summary and recommendations, provide a framework and mapping for the future development of the community.

A Vision Plan is important for a variety of reasons. It is drawn based on ideas that were generated at the charrette and is a documented record of those ideas and the resulting recommendations. Working in the format of an overall plan ensures continuity and coordination, effectively tying together improvements for individual parcels or blocks into an overall strategy for the corridor. The plan is a useful document that the community can employ when engaging the necessary groups and individuals to support the vision and go forward with development. Having a plan available is valuable for the community to refer to when issues come up regarding planning and zoning. It serves as a planning tool and as a map for short and

The Vision Plan: Introduction

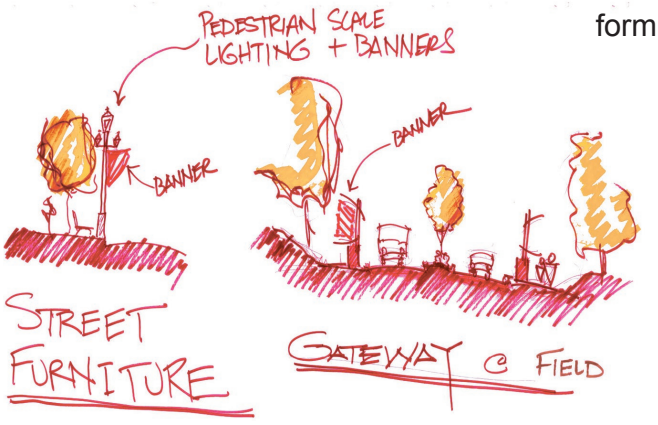
The Vision Plan for South Clinton Avenue comprises the final plans, renderings and written descriptions that are provided in the next section of this report.

A Charrette Area Plan depicts the boundaries of the three neighborhoods (Ellwanger Barry, South Wedge and Swillburg) which border South Clinton Avenue. A second Charrette Area Plan provides an overview of the proposed bicycle accommodations, locates the three proposed “districts” for the avenue and indicates the proposed green spaces throughout the area.

Each of four drawings, labeled A through D, presents proposed improvements for a segment of the corridor, beginning with Drawing A at the northern end and ending with Drawing D at the southern gateway. A detail of the intersection at South Goodman Street indicates improvements proposed for the creation of a major commercial node there. These five drawings are color coded and a legend is provided to indicate the type of development or enhancement intended by each color.

Two black and white elevations, showing the Alexander Street and Gregory Street intersections with South Clinton Avenue, provide examples of how a user would visually perceive the implemented recommendations.

The major proposed improvements are outlined in written form to accompany and explain the drawings.



Vision Plan Overview

The Vision Plan assumes the implementation of two-way traffic over I-490 at the northern end of the avenue.

Creating a Sense of Place

The Vision Plan suggests an “International” theme to be developed along the entire length of the corridor. The theme will be expressed by light poles with hanging flower baskets and flags that represent the nationalities of currrent and historic area residents, businesses and business owners.

The Plan divides the length of the corridor into three “districts” - an industrial and canal interpretive history district, a commercial district and a residential district - and proposes unique features to signify and enhance the character of each district.

Improving Connections and Accessibility

A new “urban trail” system will incorporate sidewalks, new and existing trails, pedestrian bridges and on-street bicycle accomodations to connect current and proposed green space throughout the South Clinton Avenue area and will provide connections to bordering neighborhoods and to existing city-wide trail systems.

New on-street bicycle accomodations consist of 5 foot wide “shoulder markings” to accomodate bicycle traffic, described in detail on a following page.

Two new streets are added near Diem and Seager Streets, south of Pinnacle Place.

Infill Development

New buildings are proposed for a number of vacant or underutilized corner sites at key intersections. New buildings are also proposed at other locations throughout the corridor that are currently vacant or where existing structures are of innappropriate scale or style.

Parking Strategies

On street parking is added or improved at locations along the length of the corridor.

Existing off-street parking lots adjacent to streets are screened by landscaping or fences.

Pedestrian Scale Activity

Where ever possible, buildings should have windows facing the street (no long, blank walls) and should meet the sidewalk edge or “build-to” line to provide a pleasant pedestrian experience. Where this is not possible, the sidewalk should be edged by active or well-landscaped and maintained green space or screened parking.

Well-defined crosswalks made of contrasting material are provided at all intersections.

Pocket Parks and Green Spaces

A number of green spaces and parks are developed at intervals along the length of the corridor to provide resting areas and gathering spaces for pedestrians and users. Green spaces are also proposed in locations throughout the adjacent neighborhoods. Enhanced green spaces are proposed primarily on vacant lots or where lots or existing green spaces are currently underdeveloped.

New street trees are proposed along the length of the avenue.

Strong Gateways

Gateway piers or monuments utilizing a common design are proposed at a number of major and minor gateways along the length of the corridor. Gateway markers will display plaques or flags to represent the district or neighborhood in which each marker is located.

Respect Vernacular Architecture

Buildings in need of facade improvements have been identified and marked throughout the charrette area.

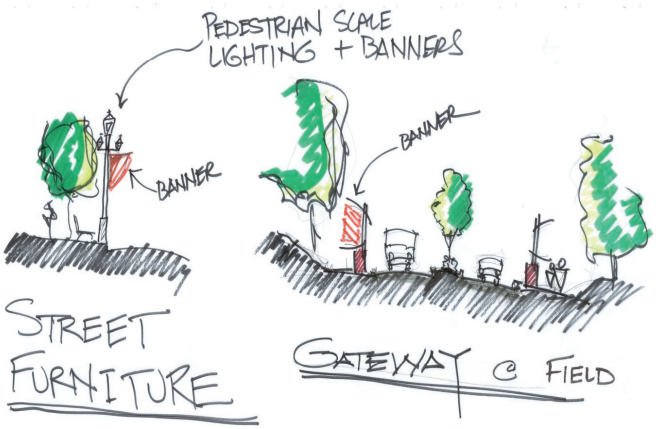
All proposed new buildings should be well designed in a contextually appropriate manner regardless of the intended use.

Calm Traffic

Bumpouts and well defined on-street parking along the legnth of South Clinton Avenue will help to calm traffic.

Mixed Use

A number of new developments and renovations to existing buildings are proposed. The role of the Vision Plan is not to prescribe specific uses, but to encourage contextually appropriate, neighborhood-oriented design for every building regardless of its type of use.



Proposed Bicycle Accomodations

On-street bicycle routes are proposed along South Clinton Avenue and throughout adjacent neighborhoods. The street width on South Clinton Avenue permits bicycle markings in only one direction and therefore the Vision Plan calls for accomodations on additional north- and south-bound streets which were not included in the original charrette area in order to assure adequate connections and accomodations for bicycles traveling through the South Clinton area to other parts of the city.

On-Street Bicycle Routes

Shoulder markings that will accomodate bicycle traffic are provided south-bound along the entire length of South Clinton Avenue. Shoulder markings for east- and westbound traffic along all bridges over I-490 are provided to connect South Clinton to Broadway; shoulder markings are provided north-bound on Broadway from Averill to Howell Street. South Clinton Avenue is connected to South Avenue via west-bound shoulder markings provided on Alexander Street and is connected to South Goodman Street via west-bound shoulder markings on Mulberry Street and east-bound shoulder markings on Rockingham Street.

Connections to Existing Trail System

The proposed on-street bicycle routes will link to two new City of Rochester trail connections which join Mount Hope Avenue with the Riverway Trail. East- and westbound shoulder markings provided on Byron Street will provide access to a connection between Mount Hope and the Riverway just south of 1 Mount Hope Avenue and to a new sidewalk connection between the Mount Hope/South Clinton intersection and the I-490 access road.

Connections to Proposed Trail System

North- and southbound markings along South Goodman Street from Broadway to Highland Avenue connect to a Genesee Transportation Council (GTC) proposed trail that runs along Highland Avenue, South Avenue, Robinson Drive and McLean Street to the Riverway Trail. The Vision Plan also proposed that a GTC proposed ten-foot wide multi-use trail running from Highland Avenue to the Brighton Meadows Office park be extended east to South Clinton Avenue.

Drawing A:
I-490 to Averill Avenue

Existing Conditions
The northernmost end of the charrette area is characterized by I-490. South Clinton Avenue becomes one way north of Byron Street, where it cross over the highway, merges with an I-490 on-ramp and increases in number of lanes. A number of historic and modern industrial buildings were and are located in this section including the existing Masline and ABVI buildings on the eastern side of the street. A number of vacant and underutilized properties lie along this section of South Clinton Avenue.

Overview of Vision Plan Features in Drawing A:

Create a Sense of Place and Identity

Canal and Industrial "Interpretive History" District - A "canal and industrial history" district defines the length of South Clinton Avenue from I-490 to Averill Avenue. An interpretive historic walk is proposed, beginning at the old canal bed (I-490) and continuing along the sidewalk on the east side of South Clinton Avenue to Averill, incorporating existing and proposed green spaces. The interpretive walk will utilize art, plaques and site markers to indicate the canal's history and significance and to discuss the related industrial activity in this area.

Pedestrian Scale Activity

New Plaza at Byron Street - A plaza at the northwest corner of Byron Street is proposed as a "downtown viewing platform" which will provide City of Rochester skyline views. This plaza improves the connection between the pedestrian bridge over I-490 and the Riverway Trail and will serve as the start of the interpretive walk.

Outdoor Cafe Seating - A bumpout at the southwest corner of Alexander Street will provide space for sidewalk cafe tables outside of Boulder Coffee.

New Crosswalk at ABVI - A midblock crossing is proposed to connect the ABVI building with its lot across the street; the crossing will have lights and buzzers for the visually impaired.

Strong Gateways

Primary South Wedge Gateway Marker at Byron Street - A South Wedge Gateway Marker is proposed at the new Byron Street plaza which welcomes southbound traffic into the neighborhood.

Secondary Gateway at Alexander Street - Gateway markers on the north- and southwest corners signify entrance to the South Wedge neighborhood from the east.

Infill Development

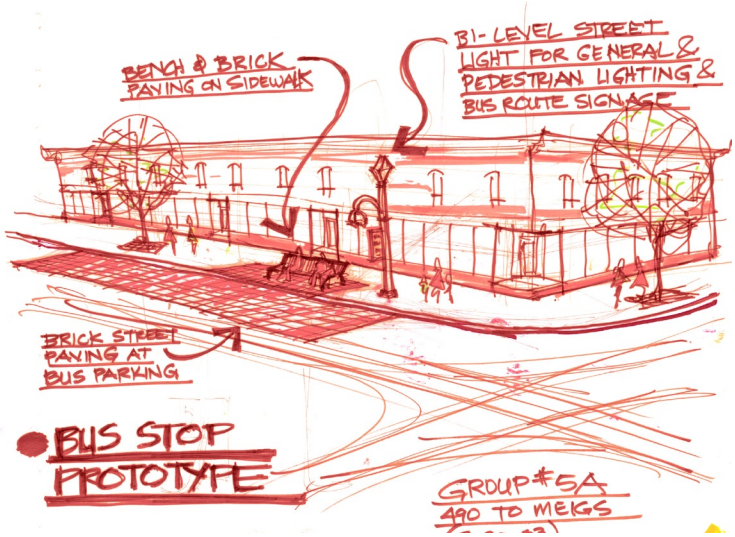
Develop Corners at Alexander/South Clinton Intersection - Landmark buildings or additions should be built on the remaining three corners at the intersection of Alexander Street and South Clinton Avenue to compliment the existing historic building on the southwest corner.

Various Proposed Development - New buildings are proposed at the northwest corner of Comfort Street, across from the current Masline building, and at other sites as indicated in the Vision Plan.

Pocket Parks and Green Spaces

Landscaping at New Byron Street Plaza - The proposed plaza at Bryon Street is envisioned as a plaza with benches and landscaping, such as trees and planters. Short trees in clover-leaf formation buffer I-490 while exposing skyline views.

Mirroring Pocket Parks between Comfort Street and Alexander Street - Two small, facing parks are proposed on South Clinton Avenue at this location.


BENCH & BRICK PAVING ON SIDEWALK
BI-LEVEL STREET LIGHT FOR GENERAL & PEDESTRIAN LIGHTING & BUS ROUTE SIGNAGE
BRICK STREET PAVING AT BUS PARKING
BUS STOP PROTOTYPE
GROUP #SA
490 TO MEGS

Drawing A

Drawing B:
Averill Avenue to Meigs Street

Existing Conditions
Between Averill Avenue and Meigs Street, South Clinton Avenue is lined with a mix of commercial, residential and industrial buildings. The building stock is intact, although the southwest corner at Gregory street and the northeast corner at Averill are eroded. Intersections with Averill, Gregory and Meigs are important as existing or potential commercial nodes. The T-intersection at Gregory marks the start of an important connection to South Avenue, Mount Hope and west across the river via the Ford Street Bridge. Between these largely intact nodes lies some suburban-style development. A number of parking lots front on South Clinton. A brownfield site which wraps the southeast corner of Cayuga Street and Gregory provides an opportunity for infill development.

Overview of Vision Plan Features in Drawing B:

Create a Sense of Place and Identity

Terminus of Industrial/Canal Interpretive Walk - Interpretive history signage at the north- and southeast corners of Averill and South Clinton marks the end of the industrial and canal history district.

Commercial District Signage and Nodes - New markers at the southwest corner of Gregory Street will signify one end of the “commercial” district. Pedestrian-oriented commerce in the district will center around the intersections with Gregory, Meigs and South Goodman Streets.

Pedestrian Scale Activity

Tree Lawns at Residential and Industrial Sites - Tree lawns in front of residential and industrial sites within the commercial district will differentiate these sites from the pedestrian-oriented commercial nodes and provide rhythym for pedestrians traversing the length of the corridor.

Outdoor Seating at New Gregory Street Plaza - Cafe tables are provided at the southwest corner of Gregory in a proposed plaza.

New Crosswalk between Gregory and Meigs Streets - A new pedestrian crosswalk is proposed halfway between the two streets.

Strong Gateways

South Wedge Markers at Averill - South Wedge Gateway markers on the north- and southwest corners on the Averill/South Clinton intersection signify entrance to the South Wedge neighborhood from the east.

Commercial District Gateway Markers - Commercial Gateway markers are located at the new plaza at the southwest corner of the intersection at Gregory Street and on the north- and southwest corners of the intersection at Meigs Street.

Infill Development

Brownfield Redevelopment - Two multi-family or mixed-use proposed buildings front on Gregory and Cayuga Streets, with parking behind the new buildings.

Gregory/South Clinton Intersection - New mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented buildings enclose a proposed plaza at the southwest corner of the intersection of Gregory Street and South Clinton Avenue.

Parking Stretegies

Shared Parking for Sunoco and the Family Medicine Center - The Vision Plan proposes that the Sunoco gas station and the Family Medicine Center on South Clinton Avenue share the existing, underutilized parking facilities behind the Sunoco station.

Improved Connections and Accessibility

New Alleys off of Gregory and Meigs Streets - An alley is provided behind residences off of Gregory Street and curb cuts on South Clinton Avenue are removed; an alley behind Rochester Meats off of Meigs Street is introduced for trucks to utilize.

Pedestrian Walkway at Family Medicine Center - A new pedestrian walkway connects Cayuga Street to the apothecary at the Family Medicine Center.

Pocket Parks and Green Spaces

Averill/South Clinton Pocket Parks - New pocket parks are proposed on the north- and southeast corners of the intersection of Averill Avenue and South Clinton Avenue.

Plaza at Gregory Street - A new plaza with trees and planters is proposed for the node at Gregory Street and South Clinton Avenue.

RG+E Yard Improvements - The RG&E yard is improved and made into a pocket park.

Drawing C:
Meigs Street to Benton Street

Existing Conditions

This portion of South Clinton Avenue contains two primary commercial nodes, at Meigs Street and at the "Five Corners" intersection with South Goodman Street and Henrietta Street. The Goodman intersection contains healthy development on some corners but is also bordered by a gas station and a parking lot which do not foster pedestrian scale street activity. A state-owned parcel to the northeast of South Clinton Avenue, bound by South Goodman Street, Karges Place and I-490, is currently undeveloped. Pinnacle Place, a high-rise residential complex, is located on the west side of the street between Meigs Street and South Goodman Street.

Overview of Vision Plan Features in Drawing C:

Create a Sense of Place and Identity

"Heart of South Clinton" Theme at South Goodman Street Intersection - This area, deemed "Five Points Plaza," will be developed by a monumental gateway marker into the commercial district to be located between Henrietta Street and South Clinton Avenue. The Vision Plan proposes a three-part public art installation on the three southern corners to create a focal point for the node and add a unified feel to the plaza.

Restaurant District - From South Goodman to Benton Streets, a "restaurant district" is proposed with outdoor cafe tables.

Strong Gateways

Neighborhood Gateway Markers at Meigs and South Goodman Streets - The southeast corner of the intersection of Meigs and Clinton and the north- and southwest corners at the intersection of Goodman and Clinton will contain gateway markers signifying the Ellwanger Barry Neighborhood. At the northeast corner of the Meigs/Clinton intersection, gateway markers will signify the South Wedge. Gateway markers at the north- and southwest corners of South Goodman Street at I-490 and the southwest corner at Meigs and Clinton will identify the Swillburg Neighborhood.

Commercial District Gateway Markers at Benton Street - A gateway marker at a proposed new bump-out on Benton Street signifies the southern end of the commercial district.

Infill Development

New Development on State-Owned Land - The state-owned parcel near Karges Place is identified for redevelopment. The Recommendations for Implementation section of this report suggests several options for types of use. Regardless of the type of use chosen, development should incorporate principles of good design including pedestrian scale street frontage and urban build-to lines.

Parking Strategies

Relocate Highland Diner Parking - The Highland Diner is moved to a more prominent location bordering the Five Points Plaza and the Highland Diner parking lot is relocated to the south of the building.

Shared Wilson Farms/ Pinnacle Place Parking - Parking for these two buildings is combined.

Improved Connections and Accessibility

New Pedestrian Connection between South Goodman Street and South Clinton - A pedestrian plaza is proposed behind the Cinema Theater, where the existing curb cut on South Goodman Street is removed.

Shorter, Better Defined Crosswalks at South Goodman Street Intersection - Well defined crosswalks are established at each crossing of the South Goodman Street intersection.

New Street Connects South Clinton to South Goodman through State-Owned Parcel - A new street through the currently state-owned parcel connects to Karges Place via a proposed alley.

New Streets near Pinnacle Place - Two new streets are proposed to connect Diem and Seager Streets to South Clinton Avenue and South Goodman Street.

New Alleys - New alleys are proposed to connect the Pinnacle Place parking lot to Meigs Street and to provide one-way circulation between Henrietta Street and Jacques Street.

Calm Traffic

Medians at South Goodman Street Intersection - Landscaped medians are introduced on streets leading to this intersection from all directions.

Pocket Parks and Green Spaces

Bus Plaza at Pinnacle Place High-Rise - A bus plaza with seating around trees is proposed at the northwest corner of the new street off of Diem Street.

Five Points Plaza - The southeast corner of South Clinton Avenue and Henrietta Street is developed as a landscaped plaza as part of the “Heart of South Clinton” theme.

Community Garden - The existing community garden on South Goodman is relocated to Seager Street.

Drawing C

Drawing D:
Benton Street to Field Street

Existing Conditions

South of Benton Street, South Clinton Avenue is defined by primarily residential development with several restaurants and other small commercial properties. The residential fabric is relatively well intact, witth housing stock dating from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. South Clinton Avenue crosses the city line just south of Field Street.

Overview of Vision Plan Features in Drawing D:

Create a Sense of Place and Identity

Residential District - The section of South Clinton Avenue between Benton Street and the southern gateway is designated as a residential district. Current housing stock and facades should be maintained and new development in this area should respect the primarily residential character of this segment of the street.

Restaurant Map - At the corner of Benton Street and South Clinton a Restaurant Map will indicate the variety of eateries in the restaurant district running north to Goodman.

Strong Gateways

City Gateway at Field Street - A tree median is proposed at the South Clinton Avenue Gateway to the City of Rochester from Brighton. This southern gateway is at the crest of a wooded hill between Field Street and Highland Avenue. The tree median and roadside tree plantings will provide the user with a feeling of passing through a “tight band of nature” that separates the city from the suburbs. Descending the hill, the user will have views of tree-lined South Clinton Avenue, which will accentuate the feeling of arrival. A low, stone wall will run alongside Clinton through the gateway, connecting the new pocket park at Highland Parkway to the existing low stone wall south of the city line. Gateway signage, art and bus shelters will reflect the materiality and rustic nature of the wooded hill.

District Gateway Markers - At the corner of Benton Street and South Clinton, gateway markers will introduce the residential district to the south and commercial district to the north.

Pocket Parks and Green Spaces

Rustic Park at Gateway - The southwest corner of Highland Parkway and South Clinton Avenue is developed into a rustic pocket park that reflects the gateway theme.

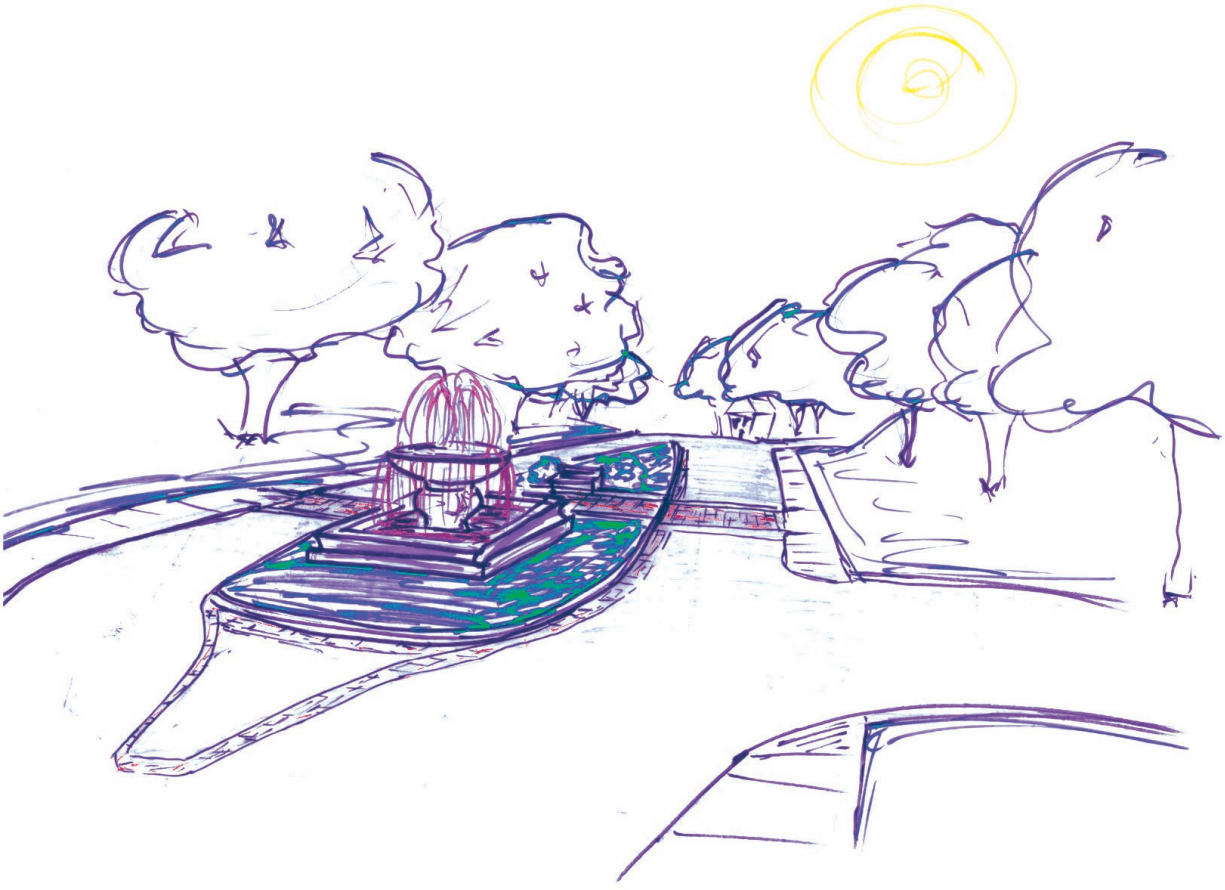
Charrette Park at Fountain Street - The charrette garden at the corner of Fountain Street and South Clinton Avenue is maintained in the Vision Plan.

Pocket Park at Benton Street - A pocket park is proposed just south of Benton Street on the west side of South Clinton Avenue.

Playground on Benton Street - A new “tot-lot” or playground is proposed on Beaufort Street.

Infill Development

Proposed Buildings - Infill buildings are located at appropriate sites throughout this section of the charrette area as shown on the Vision Plan drawing.



Drawing D

Post Charrette Work, Phase 2: Implementation

During the upcoming Implementation Phase, the ESCAPE Committee and interested citizens will embark on the process of transforming the South Clinton Avenue Vision Plan into reality. The following section of the report provides recommendations from the RRCDC about how the ESCAPE Committee and other neighbors can pursue this complex process. The implementation phase is less straightforward than the charrette process, but can be approached in a similar manner. To accomplish major goals the ESCAPE Committee will need to utilize strategic planning, engagement of community members and formation of partnerships and collaborations to move the process forward. Actual outcomes of the implementation process will depend on priorities set by the community in response to the Vision Plan.

A major goal in this next phase is to capitalize on the enthusiasm generated during the charrette and the first post-charrette phase and extend public participation into the planning and implementation process. Community members should be encouraged to act on the ideas that they generated and to invest in the neighborhood's revitalization. Community members can be engaged through a public meetings, workshops and presentations and should be kept updated through written publications such as emails, the local newspaper and newsletters such as that of South Wedge. They should have opportunities to provide input or to become actively engaged in a subcommittee to contribute towards design of the public realm and the shape of their community in the future.

Recommendations for Implementation

Steering Group

During the Charrette and Post Charrette Phase planning processes, a Steering Committee helped to coordinate activities, facilitate communication between the various groups and individuals involved, and provide other input. Since that time, the South Clinton Avenue Steering Committee became reestablished as the ESCAPE Committee. The RRCDC recommends that the ESCAPE Committee, made up of representatives from various stakeholder groups, continue to help guide the strategic planning, development activities and program and initiative efforts during the Implementation Phase. This group will oversee, review, make decisions and provide cohesiveness to the revitalization efforts and the strategic planning process. At this time, one key activity for the committee will be to focus on outreach and to engage more interested citizens from the three neighborhoods in the process.

Identify and Prioritize Goals

One of the first tasks for the Steering Committee will be to organize and categorize the various ideas into projects, programs or initiatives, to define each goal as short- or long-term and to prioritize these goals. Next the committee should identify the processes and people necessary to achieve each desired goal and earmark the groups, agencies and individuals needed to bring the goals to fruition. The RRCDC recommends that the ESCAPE Committee form subcommittees as necessary to pursue these goals, making an effort to capitalize on the various skills and abilities of the individuals involved.

Maintenance and Enforcement of Existing Regulations

A key early initiative will be to examine existing conditions in light of recommended changes. The ESCAPE Committee can determine where attention or revamping is needed regarding maintenance and enforcement of current codes and other regulations and make assessments about the mechanisms that are in place to oversee and enforce those regulations. Mechanisms need to be developed for upkeep such as street, sidewalk and green space maintenance including taking care of garbage receptacles, street furniture, tree grates and other plantings. A feeling of safety, order and well-being is an important element of successful, livable communities and this type of simple upkeep can enhance the walking and biking experience, helping to improve perceptions of safety and bringing more life to the street. The ESCAPE Committee should also assess existing safety measures and determine whether new or revamped approaches are needed to maintain a feeling of safety, order and well-being on the South Clinton corridor.

Improvements to Public Property

Many of the proposed neighborhood improvements in the Vision Plan involve publicly owned infrastructure, especially improvements to streets and sidewalks maintained by the City of Rochester, Monroe County and the State of New York. In order to implement proposed pedestrian and bicycle accommodations such as new crosswalks, trails and new road markings, bump-outs and other street-based improvements, the ESCAPE Committee will need to devise a strategy to persuade the involved agencies to implement portions of the plan over time. Some of these plans may be implemented as part of the normal capital improvement process, while others may require extensive lobbying or grant writing to come to fruition. The ESCAPE Committee should make an effort to assemble an advisory group made up of local and state officials and others who can help kick-start this process.

Improvements to Private Property

Many aspects of the Vision Plan call for improvements to privately owned property. New development, renovation, adaptive re-use and restoration should follow some general design principles in order to preserve and enhance the unique characteristics of the neighborhood and its public realm. The City of Rochester Zoning Code contains provisions for the establishment of Neighborhood Design Guidelines. If developed for South Clinton Avenue, these guidelines would exist outside of the Zoning Code as an additional manual or handbook. The guidelines would not be mandatory rules but would provide further guidance to the review authority in evaluating development plans. The guidelines would supplement the City-Wide Design Guidelines and Standards already in effect. The RRCDC is able to provide technical assistance for the development of such guidelines.

Design Guidelines should assure architectural and visual harmony between buildings while allowing for creativity and individuality. They may address:

Building orientation, materials, massing and height;

Signage, awnings, lighting and other appurtenances;

Landscaping of both decorative and usable green spaces.

In addition to playing a role in the potential development of new Design Guidelines, the ESCAPE Committee can also serve an important function in helping to make property owners aware of incentives for various types of improvements to their property. In this capacity the ESCAPE Committee serves as a conduit for information.

Parking strategies will also be addressed as private initiatives because parking areas are largely on privately owned land. The City of Rochester Zoning Code has recently reduced the requirements for off-street parking to more realistic and reasonable levels. It also now includes parking maximums and encourages shared parking solutions in an effort to minimize the unnecessary and destructive paving of our neighborhoods. The ESCAPE Committee should work with property owners to develop parking strategies that include on-street and small-lot solutions and encourage shared parking behind buildings as indicated in the Vision Plan.

Developing the State-Owned Parcel

This parcel is a tremendous asset to the southeast area, as it offers the opportunity for a large, cohesive development project that has potential to enhance the neighborhood. Programming for this parcel should appear in strategic planning done by any of the three neighborhoods. The City of Rochester is currently waiting to hear what the community wants on this land before approving any development plans. However, the community should seek consensus and arrive upon a decision as soon as possible in order to ensure maximum community-based input for development there.

The overall goal of development in this area should be to strengthen the quality of the public realm and to encourage good design parameters for both public and private development there. The RRCDC does not recommend any particular programming, but offers options based on three types of uses which are likely alternatives for development on the parcel. The new infrastructure proposed in the Vision Plan will accommodate all three of the options described below:

Residential Option:

The ideas generated during the charrette were for a community building and a potential civic space fronting on South Goodman and residential infill throughout the parcel, creating a new, small neighborhood. Two-story townhouses face each other across the new street; garages and a tree line along the interstate buffer the noise. A new community garden, in the northeast corner, features views of the downtown skyline. New two to three story mixed-use and civic structures introduce an architectural edge to South Goodman. Single family homes are introduced throughout. A small open play lot is possible on a site created at the bend of the new street. Given the residential programming, the new street will be primarily for pedestrian and local residential traffic.

Large Footprint Civic Structure Option:
Potential investors and community requests that arose since the charrette were for large footprint civic structures. These included: a community center with a 100K square foot martial arts center; an athletic training and office facility for the Razor Sharks with a community center component and a YMCA, expansion of the Monroe Avenue facility. All of these options would require significant allocation of the land to parking. Complimentary infill throughout the parcel was not determined. Given the amount of automobile traffic expected due to the community center, the new street could be used to divert truck traffic away from the South Clinton/South Goodman intersection. This would afford a more pedestrian scale at the intersection. Principles of good urban design would still be utilized on the new street.

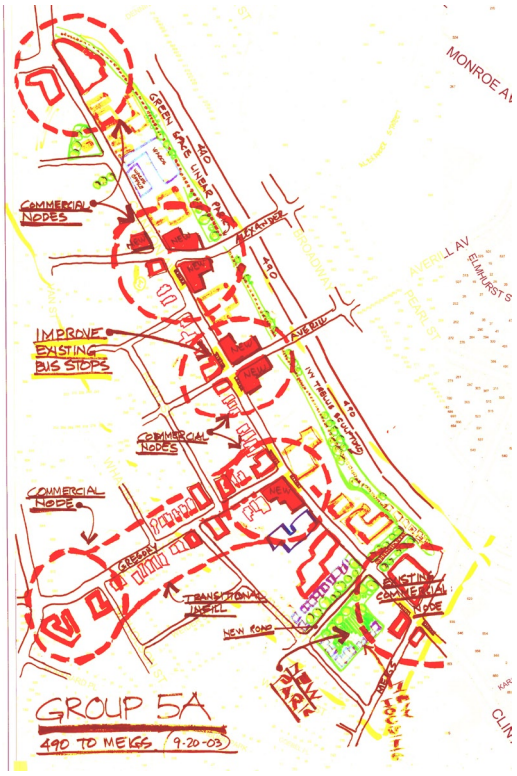
Commercial/Light Industrial Option:
Due to the adjacency of the state-owned land to I-490, the committee generated the idea of a medium sized commercial/industrial park. Allocating the land for this use offers many benefits to South Clinton. These include: incentivizing these uses off South Clinton to make way for more appropriate uses (retail/professional); offering large plots of land to land-locked business on South Clinton; diverting trucks from the South Goodman/South Clinton intersection, which affords it a more pedestrian scale and the opportunity for truck friendly infrastructure off South Clinton. Relocating commercial/industrial business from South Clinton will also open architecturally significant buildings for retail, professional and loft style residential uses.

Developing the Current Brownfield between Gregory Street and Cayuga Street

A currently vacant, L-shaped ½ acre lot at 399 Gregory Street, which wraps the southeast corner of Gregory Street and Cayuga Street, represents an important opportunity for redevelopment of a primary commercial node at the T-intersection of Gregory Street and South Clinton Avenue. The parcel is currently owned by the City of Rochester, which acquired it through a tax foreclosure in the mid 1990s. Since that time, the site has been virtually abandoned. Redevelopment of this large site will be an enormous asset to the neighborhood, with opportunity to create a neighborhood focal point that contributes to the feeling of an “urban village” at this location.

As a brownfield site, 399 Gregory has recently been designated for clean-up by the City of Rochester, which received an EPA grant to perform site assessments and devise clean up plans for various properties throughout the city. The EPA grant will be utilized by the City to contract with a company which will be able to dispose of the contaminated soil in a safe manner. No contractor has been chosen at this time, but a cohesive community-based plan for redevelopment, along with enthusiasm, prompting and the formation of partnerships with the key City players may help to speed the clean-up process.

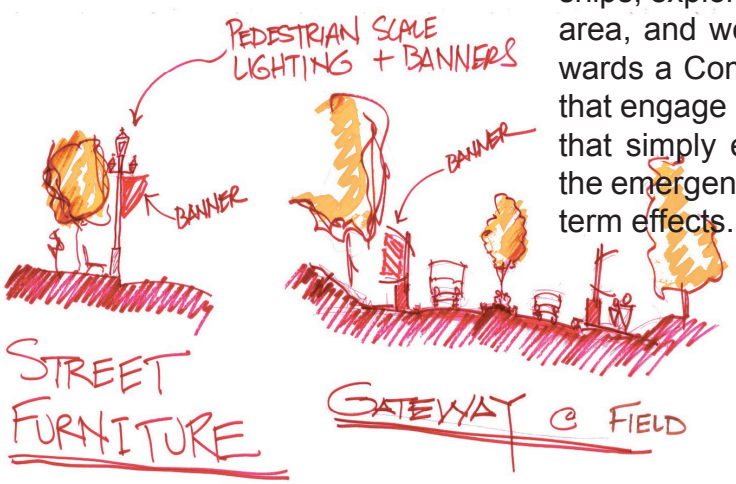
Since the time of the charrette, a number of community members have expressed a desire that the site be turned into a multi-family or light commercial development. The property is zoned C-2, which makes the site ideal for mixed use, combining retail and residential spaces. RRCDC recommends that the ESCAPE Committee play a lead role in solidifying the community's goals for this site, devising a strategy to encourage clean up and pursuing implementation of the neighborhood's goals. Based on community input, RRCDC proposes two- to three-story multi-family residential or mixed-use buildings for this property, fronting on Gregory and Cayuga Streets with parking in rear. Any type of development pursued should follow good design principles including sidewalk frontage of new buildings, transparency at ground-level, contextually appropriate design and hidden parking.

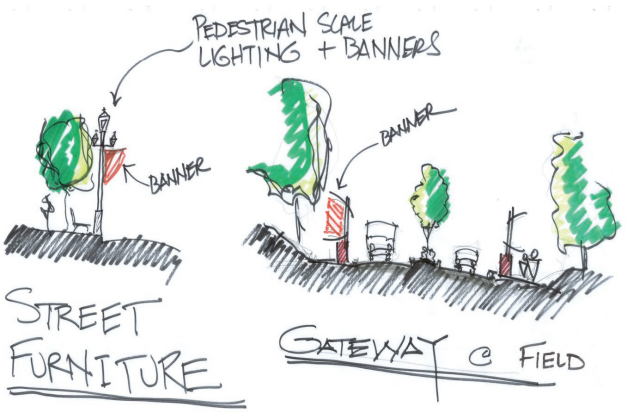


Summary and Conclusions

Planning, carrying out, and following up the South Clinton Avenue Charrette have been parts of a worthy process helping community members take steps towards setting and achieving goals for their neighborhood. The physical plans and written recommendations presented in this report will provide the ESCAPE Committee and members of the surrounding neighborhoods with a concrete record of the ideas that community members developed during the visioning stages and will provide a guide to follow as the community proceeds with the revitalization efforts. The Vision Plan presented here must be followed up with action during the upcoming implementation phase in order to become reality. The upcoming steps will be exciting but perhaps even more difficult than the initial visioning stages of the process.

The Charrette and Post Charrette Processes described in the previous pages will serve not only as a guide for development but also as a model for other communities seeking to revitalize or plan for their future. Communities of many types can follow this basic model of engaging citizens, forging new community relationships, exploring the physical and social aspects of their area, and working together to develop consensus towards a Community Based Vision Plan. Communities that engage in the charrette process will often discover that simply embarking upon this process will lead to the emergence of many unexpected yet welcome long-term effects.





A Community-Based Vision Plan
for the City of Rochester's

South Clinton Avenue

Produced by the
Rochester Regional Community Design Center

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